My Journey to Islam

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.Experience of discovering Islam

My journey to Islam

'Searching for 'Home

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَٰنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

I had been on a spiritual quest for a very long time in my life. It started early in my childhood as far back as I can remember. However, to put it down in a figurative way, the last twenty years of my life have been a quest. Complete desperation sent me searching on the long trek. Searching for what – I did not know or even realize! But I ...was searching

From the moment I was born I felt something was terribly wrong. I can remember feeling very unhappy and alienated at birth, and just wanting to "get out of there". I do not wish to imply vanity or conceit, but

I can remember being born. I have learned that babies are born with a high .”intelligence level, and have expert “newborn knowledge

From that moment at birth, I felt that “someone” would come at anytime and take me away – take me “back home” – but little did I know where home was. Little did I know what I would go through to get there. It is like the quote, “I have been through hell .and back” which I hope you can understand and read into

Being frightened of the world is quite a disincentive to follow, but I felt that something was wrong with my being there, that this was not where I was supposed to be! Right from birth and into later years of life, I just wanted to leave that environment. Of course since I was just a baby and was not able to speak, all my thoughts were kept in .my head and could not be released. Thus, anxiety and sadness built up in my mind

I grew up in the city of Toronto of an Italian culture, and raised in the Roman Catholic religion. Both the culture and the religion were very strict at all times. We were not allowed to speak or associate with anyone of a different religion, whether it was Christianity, Judaism or otherwise. This was considered sinning, and we were not to commit sins – not purposely and not at all! The other Christian

faiths were called Protestants and were considered evil since officially, they broke .away from the Vatican which is the head of the Roman Catholic Church

The Jewish people were the real bad guys in our eyes, because they had crucified .Jesus Christ and He was the Son of God as we were told and taught by our peers

The son of God was a part of the Deity, also called the Trinity which represented three persons in one God. I found it difficult to understand and accept this concept at any .time during my upbringing

Later in years as I was growing up, I became more introverted. I felt trapped and alienated in this environment with continued anxiety and depression building in me. I was very unhappy with having to live my life here. I remember crying both inwardly and outwardly in my frustration. I felt I did not ‘belong’ here. I hated where I was, and ”.longed desperately to go ‘home’. I was living in a “concrete world

I detested having to pray before statues and I hated the idea of going to the weekly confessional for which I had to tell the priest all the sins that I had committed in the past week. This was done in order to be forgiven by him, so that we would be able to .receive the Holy Communion every Sunday morning at Mass

Holy Communion represented the body of Jesus Christ and we had to be in a

pure state of mind before we could take communion, which is a thin white host made from bread. This host represented the body of the Son of God. However, we did not drink the wine – it was only for the Priest performing the Mass at the time. Later in life, after spending some time with the various Protestant religions, I did learn that the other Christian faiths drank wine at their ceremonies as well however their wine was .made of grape juice and had no alcohol in it

This bread and wine were a representation of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, and was meant to remind us that Christ was the Son of God, who had sacrificed his life for us. He had made our escape from the Jews, and created the 'real' religion of God, .which we were to follow and live throughout our lives

I had never been taught, nor had I ever heard the word Muslim. I never knew that Islam existed. We were led to believe there were only Christians and Jews born into the world by God and that they were rivals of one another in a sense. Our books were all chosen and programmed in advance for our curriculum. We studied only what we were given to read by the school and the church for our learning, and the world .history we studied was limited to American and British

Being of Italian descent, it was an

accepted part of our culture to drink wine with all of our meals from early childhood. It was a part of the food and the procedure at meal times, except for breakfast. The wine was made by all the families in the church and shared with others who came to eat with them. We did not drink it at any other time, only with our meals. However, I was not able to acquire a liking for its taste, and would ask for water or ginger ale pop .to drink

It tasted horrible in my young mind and it made me shiver whenever I tried to drink it. I wondered how the others could swallow it. To me, it somehow seemed wrong to be drink wine and thus, I never wanted it. My parents used to laugh at my peculiarities and as a young child, they discovered I had many (more) according to their way of .thinking

I was always looked upon as being 'odd' and since I was the only daughter in the family, along with having three brothers, I held a special place in my father's heart. However, the older I grew, the more 'odder' I appeared to be becoming to my family. My father worried about my behavior, and he and my brothers always kept strict .supervision over me as I was growing up

Although I was a very quiet and shy child, I felt open enough to be rebellious to their

ways. Naîve and stubborn, I was also a very slow moving person in my actions and in use of words. The ways in which I tried to express myself got me into trouble every .time I spoke

Unfortunately, I am still slow, but I accept it as a part of the being that Allah made me. People, it seemed, had no patience with me in the past. I also felt that I was ugly since as a baby, I had to wear eyeglasses, and everyone laughed at me when they saw me. I had been born partially blind and required surgery by the age of one in order to see .'and correct my horribly 'crossed eyes

I did not have many friends simply because I chose not to. Having friends who were involved and taught the same philosophy that I belonged to only kept me entrapped in their way of thinking. They were constant reminders of that which I was trying to .escape

Reacting out my rebelliousness against their beliefs in physical, emotional and mental personalities, I isolated myself from the other children in school, preferring not to play or talk to them, except for four girls that I sometimes chose to associate myself with. I .was not allowed to play or speak to boys at any time, other than my brothers

Later in years as I was growing up, I became more introverted and rarely spoke. I no longer willed to comply

with what was said or being taught to me. I thought deeply about my life and how I was living it. I was in a constant battle with fear, which to me, was entrapment by the devil himself and as I would later on learn – my own worst enemy.

I continuously questioned my peers and my father about God, whom we were never taught anything about except that He was a Divine Supernatural Being who was always around us and could not be seen visually by our eyes. We were taught about Jesus who was the Son of God, and since Jesus was the Son of God, he was therefore God in Himself. I refused to accept this theory as a child as I could not understand how he could be both the Son of God and God.

I did not accept Mary as being the mother of God. If she was the mother of Jesus and Jesus was the Son of God, how could she be the mother of the Son of God when God was a supernatural being? God was not a human being, so how could He have a Son especially since they never told us He was married! You had to be married first to have children we were told. You could not have children until you married first or you were sinning, and God did not sin! I could not help but deny all this and tell

them what I thought. I did not feel that this teaching was a model for me to be .following, and felt it was wrong to worship God in this way

My classmates laughed at me, and thought I was a stupid person. This really hurt me, but what hurt even more was not being able to say what I thought and that I had to .suppress all of it

My adventure in life was just beginning, and already I was opposed to what was being taught to me. I was dealing with some really tough issues that helped to trigger off my unusually difficult behaviour. This lead me towards disobedience and withdrawal among my religious upbringing and peers. I was always mentally fighting the establishment in which I was being raised, but the reality was I did not know how to .change it, even though I wanted to

The metaphors used by the Roman Catholic faith such as the statues of Jesus, Mary, and the Saints were all a myth to me and blasphemous to my God. I say my God because I felt He was different than theirs. Their God was basically Jesus and I did not agree at any time that Jesus was God. I never lit candles in front of the statues to pray to them if I wanted them to grant me special help from God on their behalf. I felt this was ridiculous and I preferred to pray to

God alone and not to the statues. My young mind seemed to be forever in need of His .help! He was the only one I knew I could turn too

I needed God's help to free me from this habitual way of life which I detested living in. I needed a miracle to happen, and God was the only One who could perform miracles, not statues of the saints nor of Jesus. It was God whom I deeply believed in without a .doubt, and wanted to learn more about Him in school

Our religious beliefs related only to Jesus and we were not allowed to read the Bible although our religious teachings were derived from the Bible and were called our .Catechisms

We were told that the Bible had been distorted and would only confuse us. The Catechisms taught us about the life of Jesus and had lessons in them which we .learned, pertaining only to him and not to God

Whenever I asked questions about God, I would get answers about Jesus. Frustrated at what was being told, I would sink deeper into myself, trying to rationalize what I was hearing. It made absolutely no sense and I did not believe what was being said - not one word of it - and I let my teachers know when they asked me questions. Every .Sunday morning in church, we worshipped Jesus and never a mention or word of God

I suppose my teachers along with my parents

tried to overlook my rebelliousness by pretending it was not happening in hopes that it would go away. My father would defend my resistance by saying I was just a stubborn child. Towards him, I was always so obedient and quiet, therefore, he could not understand my behaviour with my peers and disliked being told what he heard about me. It irritated him immensely and I could tell by his moods when I got home .and by the way he asked me questions

Often in class, if I did not like what I was being told, I would not listen to the teachers and would plug my ears with my fingers and stare off into space until they finished talking. My battle was a personal one as I was fighting the establishment who to me, .was the devil himself in disguise. I did not do well in school, just managing to pass

Later in years as I grew up, I became more introverted. I was no longer willing to go .along with what was being said. I rarely spoke, and thought deeply about my life

The teachers placed me in the front row of the classroom where they would be able to keep a closer watch on my attention span. When my mind wandered, I would be shocked back into reality by their unexpected and vicious attacks on my hands. They were not gentle nuns, and they used their long wooden ruler or yardstick

to smack me hard across the fingers of both hands. It hurt, but what hurt even more than the pain of the thrashings or humiliation of the other children's laughter was the pain of being punished because I had a mind of my own which I wanted to use. .Instead, I had to suppress it along with my feelings and my voice

I was still waiting to 'leave', to be taken away, to go 'home'. I hated living in this concrete world and wondered if I would ever get away. As I grew older and into my teens, I rebelled even more. I hated going to church on Sundays, hated praying only to Jesus and Mary and all the saints; not learning about God, about who God was, what He did, where He came from, and if He existed at all. I continued to argue with my own conscious because it was the devil trying to persuade me otherwise. I knew that there was a God, a Creator high up in the Heavens, and I prayed to Him alone .and not to Jesus or Mary or the saints

I did not deny Jesus, as I respected him as a human being who had once lived, but I would not worship him or put him before God. I even had the 'audacity' to tell my peers and friends that I believed Jesus was a messenger for and from God, but that he was not God

Himself. This shocked them immensely and I was regarded as the black sheep of the fold. I did pick up the Bible occasionally to read, but I could not understand it. It made no sense to me at all. It did not seem logical or easy to construe. It only frustrated my unhappy mind and made me disbelieve in my religion all the more.

I continued to go to church every Sunday and prayed faithfully every morning and night, but I prayed only and always to God. I had this very deep love for Him alone. I was not a hypocrite, nor was I a bad person at any time – I never broke the laws of society nor the laws of God.

Once I left home and was on my own, I started my journey looking for God. I became reclusive and was seen as an eccentric person. I preferred being alone rather than listening to what I assessed as 'garbage' when in the presence of conversations with others.

The older I grew the more 'odder' I appeared to be getting to my family and peers. I did not have many friends because I chose not to. Having friends who were involved and taught the same philosophy as I was only kept me entrapped in their way of thinking.

I stopped going to the Roman Catholic Church and started venturing into the many other Christian churches, trying to listen and learn

about their philosophies. Although I was still a very quiet person, I would dare to question them, realizing that this was not where I belonged either. Finally I just stopped going to any church and prayed at home to my God, whom I put first in my life and would always love first and be loyal to.

I had two very serious experiences in my life which I believe could only have been miracles from God at the time. What happened to me in each circumstance, could only have been the work of God – no human being could have done it. Each of the experiences I had renewed my firm belief in God and deepened my love for Him.

None could have happened without Him as there is no god but the one true God, the Almighty, the Powerful who can perform miracles in our lives if we place our trust in Him and ask for them. But my life continued to be a living hell, because I was not happy with it. I continually lived on the edge, waiting – waiting to go 'home'.

I drifted away from all the Christian churches and decided to look into the philosophies of other religions. I read different books and studied all religions except for Judaism. I became quite interested in Buddhism, but could not accept Buddha as being God.

I did not know God's Name, or whether he even had one. I wanted

to believe He had a name, and listened to lectures and read literature from a sect called the Jehova's Witnesses. These were the only people I knew so far that had given a name to God. What also comforted me about them was that they did not accept Jesus to be the Son of God either, so I felt we had something in common in our .beliefs. This venture, like all the others before them, did not last long

I moved far away from my family and culture because I didn't want to pretend any longer that I was a part of their way of living. I was criticized and disliked for my stance and for my attitude, so I broke all contact with them knowing we could never reach an amiable understanding. I wanted to live my life my way. The only problem was I did not know which way that was, and continued searching with greater .frustration

In the latter part of the last ten years, I researched Hinduism. I became quite interested in it, but then I realized I could not accept the many gods they worshipped. .I did become a vegetarian from that experience and would not eat meat of any kind

I decided not to search any longer and put my search on hold. I became a very spiritual person for the next five years, reading and praying and being obedient to my God, always asking His help when

I needed it, and always believing that I would find my way "home" someday. I felt that someone would come for me. 'Someone' would come and take me back where I belonged, where I would find peace of mind and happiness. I truly wondered if I .would ever really find that place – my home, the place where I knew I should be

Disappointment was setting in as I realized I had only two more religions to research. It was now a choice of which one to study first – Judaism, or Islam. Both put me in .denial

I had been reading the newspapers and listening to the media on their horrific stories about Islam. The Muslims were terrorists! And the Jews, well they had killed Jesus! !One was – or seemed to be – as bad as the other

I had read all the stories in the media about the ayatullah Khomeini who led the Islamic Revolution of Iran in ١٩٧٩. My mind froze when I thought about the choice I had to make. I perceived them both in such a negative way that I decided to stop and to not go further with my research. I would remain as I was, indifferent – but spiritual. I could never convince myself to believe in any of the other religious philosophies, and !I would certainly never become a Muslim or a Jew

As I grew older I became bitter and unhappy

with my life. I still had not found what I was searching for, and it seemed that I never would. I just wanted to “go home” but could not find it anywhere. I continued with my .prayers however both upon rising in the morning and at the end of the day

I stayed alone and read a lot. I became bored and withdrew from normal society. I disliked violence and the abuse of our environment. As for the people in the society, it seemed that they would go out and get drunk to escape reality and then became abusive to their families and to their pets. Poor families, hungry children, homeless people – all residing in one of the richest countries of the world where the government did nothing to help them. These people had no God in their lives at all. I still had my God; I still had hope; I still prayed faithfully. That was all I could do to keep myself .from going into deeper despair

I worried about the state of the world. The wars – both cold and real, and to what was happening to people that lived in a frugal household, dumped by an uncaring rich society. People only rationalized about how much wealth they could attain, the flashy new car to drive, expensive designer clothing, and bigger and fancier homes with a !pool

Neighbours seemingly were trying to outdo neighbours, family and friends with

the materialistic ‘proof’ of their success. Happiness and relaxed living were not a part of the lifestyle and I wanted no part of this sort of life. Many of these people attended a church on Sundays, superficially and pretentiously worshipping their God. Often times, and more often than not, living in a state of complete loneliness, relying on their !computers or friends for fun and companionship to break away from it all

One day at my job, I received a telephone call from a young child. This child was calling for help but I was not sure how to help her. She persisted in calling me back continuously that day after I had hung up on her. She did not know her address or her telephone number and said she was left alone. I tried questioning her, but to no avail and thus, had to hang up because I had other phones ringing which I had to quickly .answer in the office

This child was begging for help so I went to my supervisor for advice on how to handle the call. After listening to the child herself, my supervisor got upset with me and told me not to bother answering her calls anymore and to hang up until she stopped phoning. I wanted to keep the call on hold and call the police to try to trace the child’s .phone number

My supervisor said ‘no’ don’t do that, and told me

to go back to my job. She was annoyed with me and said I couldn't "save the world"! She was right, I could not save the world – not without the help of others. People had to care to help, but people only cared about themselves and not about those in dire .need. They simply had no time to think about anyone but themselves

I was left feeling troubled for a long time after that phone call. My conscious bothered me particularly for not having sought to get that child some help. I often wondered if .that child was all right, or if it was just a call to loneliness. I will never know

One Saturday while visiting the local library, I came across a book that interested me. The writer was a Muslim. I would go to the park on weekends to read and write and noticed that many of the people who were walking through the park were Muslims. I also noticed that my neighbours who lived in the apartment above mine were .Muslims

I would not look at them long or acknowledge them because I feared them. I feared .that I could not trust them and that it was better that I just mind my own business

Every morning before sunrise, I would hear them get up and hear the water run. The tap would open and run, and then shut off; and again it would be turned on and

run for a few seconds before being turned off. I wondered what they were doing! I woke up every morning to the habitual sound of their water taps that seemed to be a .ritual

It happened every morning I noticed and I became quite curious as to what they were doing. They were quiet people that kept to themselves. Later on, I learned that these people were saying their morning prayers. I admired them for their punctuality and faithfulness. They had a loyalty to God that I liked, and wanted! But they were also ...Muslims I reminded myself

The Kitchener Library did not have many books on Islam except for the one that I had found there and I was searching for more to read on this religion. One day, a co-worker of mine brought me a book to read called the "Qur'an"(۱) which I kept it on my desk without bothering to glance through. She invited me to go to lectures in Toronto with her and her family to hear the various scholars speak at a Masjid(۲) on various .Islamic topics

I decided to go one time and liked what I heard. The male speaker was spell binding and held my undivided attention by what he was saying. At last, some intellectual talks about God whom he called Allah! Someone had finally given a name to God! This interested me and I wanted to know more! I went

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۱ - The Qur'an is the holy book of Islam that Muslims believe was revealed by God .(through the Angel Gabriel to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family

۲ - The place where Muslims gather to perform their Prayers and other religious ."programs are held, usually referred to as the "Mosque

.with my friend and her family to hear other lectures from that time on

I observed the way the Muslims prayed to their God in the Masjid and noticed the segregation between the men and the women. I felt this was a good idea as I could see the women focused only on their prayers and on Allah. There was no possibility of the men eyeing the women or staring at them and losing their train of thought. These people really loved God I felt, and it made me very happy to be among them. I felt .honoured to be there

During the course of my job, I began to meet more and more Muslims coming into the agency. Once, I had the opportunity of seeing a Muslim man in prayer. As I watched him in deep devotion, my heart ached. My heart ached even more when I heard his voice in prayer. I had never witnessed a love so strong for God before, and never from a man in prayer the way I saw this man pray! I could not believe what I was seeing, and put my head down so that he would not know that I was watching him. It .was such a beautiful voice calling out in love to God in such a beautiful way

When I went back with my friend from work to hear more lectures, I began to notice that all the men on the other

side of the wall prayed with such fervor and love for God. I wanted more of this Allah, but I was still afraid of becoming involved in their faith. This was the beginning of my .journey – my journey towards Islam

My First Contact with Islam

Another time, I with my co-worker to the Masjid in Toronto to hear more of the .lectures on Islam

My friend, Rukhsana, had insisted earlier that my head be covered before we went inside, as this was a part of the law in Islam for women. For all women to cover their heads is a matter of reverence and respect to Allah, as well as to the high moral values that are placed in the Islamic society to preserve the chastity, respect and dignity of the woman. It just so happened that she had another hijab(١) stored in the !car

She even said I looked beautiful, although I had no time to catch a glimpse of myself in a mirror. She had also asked me ahead of time to wear long loose fitted clothing, and once inside, I understood why. All Muslim women and men are required to dress in a manner that is considered modest and dignified. The diversity of female dress, as I later learned, is often the expression of local customs in Muslim countries. The hijab, which is a scarf or large handkerchief is worn to cover the hair, and the long dress is called the Jilbab in Arabic. The

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.The scarf or covering that a Muslim woman wears on her head to cover her hair -١

feet were to be covered with socks when inside the Masjid as a part of the hijab and .shoes were always removed before entering

The lectures were informative and very easy to understand and my interest was definitely captured by what I was listening to. I was now learning about God whom .”they called “Allah

Finally”, I remember thinking to myself, “It's all about God, and He does have a“ name!” What a beautiful name! I loved the name Allah instantly, and felt my body surge as my heart became so filled with love and emotion for Him. An emotion so deep and spell-bounding at the time, my eyes welled in uncontrollable tears. What’s wrong with me I thought? Why am I crying? I certainly did not want my friend .Rukhsana to see me doing this! She would think that I was unstable

One thing I knew for certain as we were leaving the building was that I felt comfortable there. These people truly and only placed God first. They seemed so devout in their manner of worship, expressing such honor and love to Him. It appeared to me that each and every one of them was thinking only about God while .they were in there

Women with heads covered in hijab, and bodies clothed in long loose fitted style garments were bending and kneeling and standing repetitiously as they said their .prayers in silence

Even the young and small children seemed to have

respect for Him by keeping silent while their parents prayed to Allah. The loud clear voices of the men who are segregated on the other side of the wall praying in Arabic were the only voices that could be heard. Everyone's attention was focused .”completely on God – “Allah

I was happy to witness this from people who were complete strangers to me. I did not want to leave there. Forgetting about my head, which was still covered with the hijab, I walked out the door into the large crowd in the parking lot to meet Rukhsana and .her husband ‘Azim and their youngest son ‘Abbas

Rukhsana introduced me to the many women there whom she knew and were her friends. The names were forgotten immediately one after another, but the warm memory of their cheery smiles will never be forgotten. On the drive home, I was not questioned regarding my opinion nor was I pursued into becoming involved in their thoughts and beliefs. I felt no pressure whatsoever at any time from her or her family .regarding their religion

Somehow I thought this one would be just like all the others, but it was not – it was different. No mental push, pull, coax or conniving of their beliefs was imposed on me which left me happy and relaxed. They displayed an open sense of moral respect for who I was as a person – as a human being – not for what I

was supposed to be. Respect in Islam, is one of the number one primary beliefs and practices of Muslims towards all of their brothers and sisters in faith as well as non-.Muslims

Another of the many other attributes I learned about Islam was that it maintains that rights must be accorded to all human beings regardless of race, colour or creed. Its' followers are required to exhibit respect and tolerance even to those who do not share their faith. Freedom of conscience is guaranteed by the Holy Qur'an itself :where it is stated

(There is no compulsion in religion." (Qur'an, Chapter ۲, Verse ۲۵۶"

Islam therefore further encourages Muslims to respect the rights of all living things .and to be conscious of their environment and surroundings

Time went on and it came to a point where there were no more lectures I could attend in Toronto that suited to convenience. I soon forgot about Islam and went on with my life in the quiet manner that I was accustomed to living - alone and private. I had family who lived not too far from me, however I felt alienated from them. I was .still searching for that missing link in my life, which I had still not found

I began to notice many Muslim people were visiting the Multicultural Center where I worked, seeking assistance for various legal needs. Most were highly intellectual and educated persons who were having a problem with learning the English

.language

Since Islam stresses the need for a Muslim to continue upgrading his or her knowledge in all aspects of life, whether it is through continuous education, reading, volunteering and community work, I noticed that a majority of them had obtained a .university degree while living in their country

It is interesting to note that Muslims established the First University in the world in Cairo, Egypt and not only this, but it was the Muslims who were mainly responsible for the great advances in medicine, mathematics, astronomy, geography, physics and .literature

Saturday mornings, I decided to volunteer my time at the Centre, to teach both conversational and Basic English to many foreign persons seeking help with the .language

Although I am not a professional teacher, it was during this experience that I met many Muslims, who later became my close and loyal friends. These Muslims came from countries such as Sudan, Somalia, Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Indonesia, Bosnia, Libya, .Yemen and China

All of these people had high degrees of education in their countries, which unfortunately was not automatically accepted in Canada without further standards that are applied here. Even though I was not a professional teacher, this did not hinder their desire to be helped and they were only too grateful for whatever .resource they could use to help speed up their learning

I can remember being asked by a Muslim once what my religious affiliation was. Dumbfounded, the only suitable answer I could give at the time was that I was a

spiritual person but attended no particular church nor believed in any dogma. I definitely believed in God, and only one God. I chose to consider myself as a very .spiritual person who was now at the end of the line when it came to religion

It was this person whom I had witnessed in the deep and sincere prayer, that brought me to know that a love for God first and only, was not something I alone realized. His .name was Majid which is one of the ninety-nine names of God

In all the other churches I had been to during the past years, the men did not show any emotion towards God at all. It was as if they were there in attendance physically but not mentally. I always had the feeling that the men did not love God with the same .fervor the women did. At least they did not express it in the churches I had gone to

I will never forget the way I saw this man pray. Although I could not understand what he was saying since he was praying in Arabic, it was very clear that he placed God first. His complete attention both in body and mind was absolved entirely in what he was doing. He was in a completely different world, immersed in his prayers. It was so beautiful, that it left a lasting impression implanted in my mind forever. This was the kind

of prayer that I wanted to be involved in, thoughts and attention dedicated in .passionate love to Almighty God

Continuation of the Divine Light

One day, I found a book lying on my desk that Rukhsana had brought in and left for me to read. It was a long time before I decided to take it home and look at it. This book was the Holy Qur'an in English. The Qur'an according to Muslim belief, is the Word of God revealed to the last Prophet Muhammad Mustafa (blessings of Allah be upon him and his family). It is the holy book for all the Muslims everywhere in the .(world which they follow that contains ۱۱۴ chapters (called Surahs

Muslims believe it is the pure word of God to Muhammad, unadulterated over the past ۱۴ centuries. The Qur'an deals with issues which affect human beings such as piety, human conduct and worship. There are also injunctions which act as guidelines on how to create a just and virtuous society, as well as the practice of ethics. It also teaches the belief in the Day of Resurrection. Islam is the final religion given to human beings, revealed by God to the last Prophet who was named Muhammad (blessings of .(Allah be upon him and his family

Muhammad was a very honest and truthful person, who was born in Mecca (Saudi Arabia) in the year ۵۷۰ A.D. He was deeply religious natured and at the age of ۴۰ he was approached by God

through the angel Gabriel to proclaim the religion of Islam to humanity. Islam is a monotheistic religion and all Muslims are required to believe in Moses and Jesus (and .others) as Prophets of God

I started reading the Qur'an and could not put it down. It was so easy to read and understand and thus, I loved it. I would read it every night in bed and take seriously .what I learnt from it, telling Rukhsana how much I had read

Weeks later, another book was placed on my desk which also came from her. It was entitled "Know Your Islam". I decided to read this one too. This book gave me more .details about Islam

One time she invited me to go to a lecture at the Masjid in Kitchener which were held there on Thursday night. The speaker was Br. Shafiq Hudda, administrator of the Islamic Humanitarian Service. Again I was introduced to many friendly and welcoming ladies and began to attend the sessions there every week. Once more, I witnessed the sincere love and recognition given to Allah that I had observed by the Muslims in .the Toronto Masjid. It was something wonderful to be a part of

Acceptance of the Truth

It was spring time just going onto summer. On Sunday afternoons, I visited a local park to sit, relax and read. It was there in Victoria Park that I purposely took notice of the many Muslims who were out walking. The men

walked together with the men, and the women met and walked or would sit on a bench and wait for their husbands to come back for them later.

I had taken up an interest in writing and attended a Creative Writing class held once a week by a professional teacher named Veronica Ross, who is a well-known Canadian author. I began writing my observations on the Muslims I saw in the park and developed my curiosity towards them.

It was on a Sunday afternoon in early May while sitting that I noticed a young Muslim woman alone on a bench. I decided to approach her and talk to her. She welcomed me with a warm smile and gesture and invited me to sit and talk with her. Her name was Annam, and she had just arrived in Canada from Iraq and was recently married to her husband Salam whom she was waiting for in the park.

Annam seemed to understand my English quite well although she was not able to reply fully. I told her what I was doing and of my growing interest in Islam. She offered to help me with whatever information I needed. Later on, I learnt she was a professional High School teacher in Iraq before coming to Canada. I liked her attitude and the happy spirit that went along with her good nature and everlasting patience with my queries. We exchanged telephone numbers and she introduced me to her

husband when he came back to get her. Salam seemed happy for her that she made a new friend and he showed no concern that I was not a Muslim at the time.

We became close, good friends and our friendship developed into her leading me further into Islam. We started going to the Masjid every week together and later on, she also started to teach the children at the Maderssah(١). She read to me many Surahs from the Qur'an while also teaching me more about Islam.

I am forever grateful to her for all the help she has given me in my journey towards Islam. I like to think that Allah inspired her to meet me in the park that day. I believe that there is a certain connection between cause and effect; that the sphere of life's events does not just take place by chance or accident. Rather, everything is subject to a law – Allah's law.

Six months after meeting Annam, I became a Shi'a Muslimah and vocalized my Shahadah(٢) at the Masjid with Br. Shafiq Hudda making the announcement over the loudspeaker and welcoming me into al-Islam and the teachings of the Ahl al-Bait (peace be upon all of them).

I felt deep contentment and happiness inside myself. It was as if I had finally found the path to my way home – the inner peace I had been searching for since birth. I knew without a doubt that this was it.

١- Madressah is an Arabic word meaning the place were religious classes are held.

٢- The Shahadah is the vow one makes to become a Muslim. One must believe and affirm that There is no creation or entity worthy of worship except for Allah and that Muhammad is the last Messenger of God.

Had the closed down finally opened allowing me to venture into consciousness? The newborn longing and suppression stored inside me for so long now seemed .appeased

At Peace with My Inner Self

I now look back at the years of struggle, heartache and pain with complete understanding of why I went through it. I had to go through them as part of the .learning process in my journey towards Islam

Difficulties play a decisive and undeniable role in personal growth and development. Had there been no tests and tribulations in life, human merit and worth would have no value. Similarly if difficulties did not exist, there would not have been any motive for .struggle and endeavour to continue in the search for inner peace and tranquility

I no longer live in that 'Concrete World'. I was carried a long distance before I was freed. I have begun life all over where I know I rightfully belong. My life now as a Shi'a Muslim - for my destination was to Islam and back to my roots – just as in the beginning of one born a Muslim, something that took me so long to discover, from the start of my journey at birth, trying to work for Allah to the best of my given abilities, .Insha-Allah (God Willing), alongside my Muslim brothers and sisters in Islam

Subhanallah

.Glory be to Allah alone

Some of the Tenants of Islam

The word Islam means the submission and commitment to the one and only God and comes from the same root-word as Peace

or Salam. Islam teaches us that god (Allah) creates and then communicates with human beings. God communicates by inspiring human beings towards goodness. A .Muslim orients and devotes their life to the service of Allah

Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world, yet it is the most misunderstood one, unfortunately. Islam teaches that human beings are born pure and sinless and that no .one can take the responsibility for the sins of others

A Muslim maintains inner spiritual purity through constant prayer, which is called the Salat. Prayer is practiced ۵ times a day with the major congregational prayers held on Friday. In all the prayers, the Muslims pray directing towards the Ka'bah situated in the east in the city of Mecca in the present day Saudi Arabia. Far from being extremists and fanatics, Muslims are a peaceful and law abiding people who submit to .a tolerant attitude

The principle roots of the religion of Islam are five: Tawhid or Monotheism which is the belief in the Oneness of God; 'Adalah or the complete justice of Allah; Nubuwwah or the Prophethood of divinely appointed Messengers; Imamah or divinely appointed leadership over humanity after the death of the Prophet, and Ma'ad or belief in the .Day of Judgement

لاٰ إِلٰهَ إِلاَّ اللّٰهَ مُحَمَّداً رَسُولُ اللّٰهِ

عَلِیٌّ وَلِیُّ اللّٰهِ وَ وَصِیُّ رَسُولُ اللّٰهِ و خَلِیفَتُهُ بِلاٰ فَصْلِ

:Which means

There is no creature or entity worthy of worship except for God (Allah), Muhammad is" .the (final) Messenger of Allah

Ali is the Wali (beloved) of Allah and the successor to Muhammad Mustafa, and he‘ ”.(‘Ali), is the (first) Caliph of the Prophet

Salat: Muslims practice Salat (prayers) five times a day, which is obligatory. Through the constant remembrance to God by prayers, one is enjoined to maintain inner spiritual purity. Muslims are encouraged to pray in congregation and all the prayers .are said in Arabic

Sawm: Fasting is regarded as an essential component in the growth of spirituality within a person. It makes a person aware of the plight of the poor and helps him develop willpower, so as to discipline his desires. Every year in the month of Ramad'han(١), Muslims are required to fast by refraining from food and drink during .the day, from sunrise to sunset

Zakat and Khums: Undertaking social responsibility by helping the needy is greatly emphasized in Islam by way of Zakat and Khums (Alms). Wealth is seen to be a trust from God to be dispensed in His way. Muslims are therefore required to purify their .wealth by spending a portion of their income for those in need

This helps fulfill the Islamic vision of creating a just and equitable society. The Holy Qur'an commands the payment of Zakat from the wealthy towards the poor having a .right to it; as vigorously as the saying of prayers

Setting aside one-fifth of the year's savings after deducting all lawful expenses from .(earnings is known as Khums (one-fifth Levy or Income Tax

Hajj: Every

١- The ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar.

Muslim is required to go to Mecca once in their lifetime for pilgrimage (Hajj), providing there are no financial or physical constraints on him or her. This provides a unique opportunity for them to meet Muslims from different nations. Every year on the pilgrimage, about two million Muslims converge on Mecca to stand beside one another in prayer to God, to worship and serve Him. All pilgrims wear white clothing during the rituals, which are meant to purify the faithful inwardly. The celebration to .end the Hajj is commemorated by the exchange of gifts

Contrary to the thinking of some narrow-minded persons that religion does not care for things other than various forms of worship and obligatory and unlawful matters, Islam attaches great importance to works of public service like the construction of Masajid, bridges, water reservoirs, improvements of roads and everything which .contributes to common welfare of the society

Islam insists that its' followers assist their brethren-in-faith in the solution of their problems and not to leave them alone to face the difficulties. There are a number of problems that cannot be solved by one person alone, but if others assist him he can .overcome them

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (blessings of Allah be upon him and his family) says: "One who does not take interest in the affairs of Muslims is not a Muslim. And that person too, is not a Muslim who hears a Muslim calling for help and does not respond to his

(call." (al-Usul al-Kafi pp. ٣٩٠

The Prophet Muhammad (blessings of Allah be upon him and his family) has also stated: "One who fulfills the need of a Muslim brother, is like one who has been ".worshipping Allah throughout his life

Imam 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him) the cousin and first successor to the Prophet Muhammad (blessings of Allah be upon him and his family) has said: "Have you fully realized what Islam is?" "It is indeed a religion founded on truth, such a fountain-head of learning that several streams of wisdom and knowledge flow from it. A lamp that several lamps will be lighted from it. A lofty beacon of light illuminating the path of Allah. It is such, a set of principles and beliefs that will satisfy every seeker .of truth and reality

Know you all, that Allah has made Islam the most sublime path for attainment of His Supreme pleasure and the highest standard of His worship and obedience. He has favoured it with noble precepts, exalted principles, undoubtable arguments, unchallengeable supremacy, and undeniable wisdom. It is up to you to maintain the eminence and dignity granted to you by the Lord. To follow it sincerely. To do justice to its articles of faith and belief. To obey its tenets and its orders implicitly and to give ".it the proper place in your lives

Imam al-Baqir (peace be upon him), the fifth successor of the Prophet Muhammad (blessings of Allah be

upon him and his family) has said: “Some of the rights of a believer upon his brother are that: he should feed him when he is hungry, conceal his secrets, assist him in his difficulties and make them easier for him. pay his debts and protect his children after (his death.” (al-Usul al-Kafi, pp.۳۹۳

Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him), the sixth successor of the Prophet Muhammad (blessings of Allah be upon him and his family) says: “A believer is the brother and sister of the other believer and is like an eye and a guide for them. He does not commit breach of trust with him, does not oppress him, does not deceive him and (fulfills the promise made with him.” (al-Usul al-Kafi, pp.۳۹۲

About center

In the name of Allah

هَلْيَسْتَوِيالَّذِينَيَعْلَمُونَوَالَّذِينَلَايَعْلَمُونَ

?Are those who know equal to those who do not know

al-Zumar: ٩

:Introduction

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan, from ٢٠٠٧, under the authority of Ayatollah Haj SayyedHasanFaqihImami (God blesses his soul), by sincere and daily efforts of university and seminary elites and sophisticated groups began its activities .in religious, cultural and scientific fields

:Manifesto

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan in order to facilitate and accelerate the accessibility of researchers to the books and tools of research, in the field of Islamic science, and regarding the multiplicity and dispersion of active centers in this field

and numerous and inaccessible sources by a mere scientific intention and far from any kind of social, political, tribal and personal prejudices and currents, based on performing a project in the shape of (management of produced and published works from all Shia centers) tries to provide a rich and free collection of books and research papers for the experts, and helpful contents and discussions for the educated generation and all classes of people interested in reading, with various formats in the .cyberspace

:Our Goals are

(propagating the culture and teachings of Thaqalayn (Quran and Ahlulbayt p.b.u.t-

encouraging the populace particularly the youth in investigating the religious issues-

replacing useful contents with useless ones in the cellphones, tablets and computers-

providing services for seminary and university researchers-

spreading culture study in the publich-

paving the way for the publications and authors to digitize their works-

:Policies

acting according to the legal licenses-

relationship with similar centers-

avoiding parallel working-

merely presenting scientific contents-

mentioning the sources-

.It's obvious that all the responsibilities are due to the author

:Other activities of the institute

Publication of books, booklets and other editions-

Holding book reading competitions-

Producing virtual, three dimensional exhibitions, panoramas of religious and tourism- places

.Producing animations, computer games and etc-

Launching the website with this address: www.ghaemiyeh.com-

Fabricatingdramatic and speech works-

Launching the system of answering religious, ethical and doctrinal questions-

Designing systems of accounting, media and mobile, automatic and handy systems,- web kiosks

Holding virtual educational courses for the public-

Holding virtual teacher-training courses-

Producing thousands of research software in three languages (Persian, Arabic and- English) which can be performed in computers, tablets and cellphones and available and downloadable with eight international formats: JAVA, ANDROID, EPUB, CHM, PDF, HTML, CHM, GHB on the website

Also producing four markets named "Ghaemiyeh Book Market" with Android, IOS,- WINDOWS PHONE and WINDOWS editions

:Appreciation

We would appreciate the centers, institutes, publications, authors and all honorable .friends who contributed their help and data to us to reach the holy goal we follow

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